

Mohawk Valley Library System

Director's Report

June, 2022

Administration & Governance

The 2022 library system state aid allocations were announced on July 8. With luck, we will begin receiving this aid in August. MVLS will receive a 3.73% increase over 2021 aid levels. The system aid formula is complex, but the main variable factor is population. Since this is the first year aid is computed based on the 2020 census, the aid changes were more variable than usual. Our system lost population at about the same rate as New York State as a whole, so we received a typical increase that was shared by 4 other systems. Eleven systems received bigger increases than MVLS; and 7 smaller increases.

This increase provides an additional \$54,000 in the 2022 MVLS budget, of which about \$44,000 is unrestricted money. We will be doing positive budget amendments in September! If this increase is built upon in future years, MVLS will remain in a strong financial position. Just as with member library budgets, a modest increase each year has a substantial positive effect over time.

On a separate finance related issue, our auditor at T.M. Byxbee, Glenn Winter, has left the company. One of the company partners, Tom Gessick, has worked with MVLS in the past, so we are still in good hands. While change is always a jolt, it is actually healthy to get a change of auditors periodically.

It appears we are all set to go with the repairs and repainting of the back wall. I am now working directly with the owner of the company. We have added increased protection to the more vulnerable parts of the wall – the bottom edge and the two ends – while at the same time lowering the price. I am encouraged by the amount of attention that they are giving to this project and am hopeful that we will develop a more long-term relationship with this contractor. Providing we are satisfied with their work, we will then move to the work on the front ramp railing and the garage thresholds. At the same time, we are getting quotes from signage companies for a building mounted dimensional letter sign.

We will continue to discuss meeting related issues at the July board meeting. These include the annual meeting, the day/time of regular board meetings and the overall meeting schedule, including the annual board retreat concept. For the regular board meetings, the two proposals on the table include changing the meeting time to afternoon, for example 4:00 p.m., to facilitate easier participation by trustees with work schedules. The second proposal is to change from our current irregular, monthly except for these 4 meetings, to an every other month schedule, adding a board retreat in the spring.

The staff is working on developing the new annual meeting concept and format. The general logistics are to hold a free, less formal, quick light meal event at a member library location (we have at least 3, and probably more, that could accommodate us) 6:00 – 7:30 on a weeknight in late September or early October. The general program will be designed to encourage information sharing and collaboration among the member libraries, with incentives for libraries to include staff and trustees in their contingent.

The new library minimum standards require regular updates to library policies. To help facilitate that, and to codify any changes MVLS may make to meeting schedules, we will begin a regular policy review at MVLS board meetings, starting with our Bylaws and other governance policies. We will begin that in

September. The MVLS policies can be found on the website at:
<https://www.mvls.info/insidemvls/policies-and-guidelines/>.

Automation and Resource Sharing

The next meeting of the JA Council is scheduled for July 13. JA staff is planning for an upgrade in the Polaris software in November. We continue to deal with supply chain challenges for computer equipment.

The MVLS delivery contract with Arnoff Global Logistics ends in October. MVLS has several goals for tightening up the contract to give us more clarity and flexibility as we go forward. That said, in general we have been very pleased with our delivery service. But delivery volume is decreasing, and we may need more options for keeping the service economical.

Outreach, Adult and Youth Services

The MVLS Tech Savvy programs are growing and changing. This series started as a part of the defunct Adult Literacy state funding. We are continuing the project even though the funding stream is no more. The sessions, mostly virtual, are a combination of classes taught by Mary Carrier and sessions provided by contractors. Three to four sessions are scheduled each month.

In more adult literacy news, Heather has established positive contacts with the Schoharie, Fulton and Montgomery County literacy agencies. All have been provided with our Job Search Toolkits and with information on the Tech Savvy programs. Heather is also continuing to work on establishing a contact with the Schoharie County jail.

Mary and Sharon are working on a project, funded through the ARPA grant, to help libraries with accessible and effective websites. We will soon have a template to share with libraries, and training will be provided to help libraries incorporate accessibility features into their websites.

The Summer Reading program is in full swing in MVLS libraries. One unique aspect of this year's program is a library scavenger hunt developed by the Amsterdam Free Library. Nine MVLS libraries have signed up to be sites on the scavenger hunt. This project really encourages families to visit many MVLS libraries this summer.

The state, for the first time, has released funding from the I Love My Library fund. The MVLS share was \$3,900. Funds have been spent to purchase more items for our STEM kits, like large-scale building bones and tablets.

Heather has begun working with staff from Southern Adirondack and Upper Hudson, as well as the North Country and Southern Tier Library Systems, on a training initiative to help libraries with diversity, equity and inclusion. We look forward to helping libraries improve services for everyone.

Member Services

Library visits continue! Mary continues to visit member libraries to assist with technology issues and do technology assessments. And Heather has coordinated a schedule for MVLS staff to assist libraries with specific summer reading activities, emphasizing programs funded through MVLS mini grants. Being more present to libraries one of our goals for making MVLS more relevant to a wider representation of member library staff.

We have several libraries interested in submitting library construction projects in this round. The larger projects will be from Amsterdam and Schenectady. MVLS will have \$885,064 to allocate in this cycle. The deadline for libraries to have information submitted in the grant portal for MVLS review is September 8. We have the Library Services committee tentatively scheduled for September 13.

Our June 21 panel, "Libraries Finding New Ways to Serve Communities" was well received. We have begun planning for a September session that will focus on library staffing. We are also beginning to work on revitalizing and updating the MVLS Directors' Council. The goal is to have the directors more active in setting the agenda and organizing sessions, making MVLS a facilitator, not the driver of the bus.

Advocacy & Awareness

In addition to the website project mentioned above, the Capital District Library Council ARPA project also includes an advocacy and marketing component. Marketing firm Rueckert Advertising has developed a summer campaign that will include billboards, bus ads, flyers and radio spots that encourage library use. A summary is included with the meeting materials.

The second issue of the new MVLS newsletter, *Shelf Life*, is in production. You should receive it via email, and it will also be posted on the website at: <https://www.mvls.info/insidemvls/newsletter/>.

On August 9 and 10 I will be attending the biannual New York Alliance of Library Systems retreat. This year, the event will feature Patrick Sweeney of EveryLibrary, an organization that assists libraries with advocacy issues.

Foundation Golf tournaments are scheduled for July 25 and September 26. This year, we had no applications for the summer Foundation Advocacy grants. MVLS offers the opportunity for a summer grant, but most libraries schedule their advocacy efforts with spring budget votes, so it isn't as much on their radar in summer. We always get applications in the winter round. We will be offering a version of the Dream & Do grants later toward the end of summer.

Meetings, Contacts & Field Visits

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| 6/1/2022 | Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library |
| 6/2/2022 | Barbara Madonna Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Paul Tonko, U.S. House of Representatives |
| 6/6/2022 | Foundation Board MVLS Board of Trustees Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library Kim Zimmer, The Community Library |
| 6/7/2022 | MVLS Board of Trustees |
| 6/8/2022 | Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library Nicole Hauser, Gloversville Public Library Don LaPlant, The Community Library |
| 6/9/2022 | Foundation Board MVLS Board of Trustees MVLS Member Library Directors |
| 6/10/2022 | MVLS Board of Trustees |

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| 6/14/2022 | Charles Reed Jacqueline Haddam MVLS Member Library Directors Glenn Winter, T.M. Byxbee, CPA, PC |
| 6/15/2022 | Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Foundation Board Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library MVLS Member Library Directors Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System |
| 6/16/2022 | MVLS Board of Trustees |
| 6/17/2022 | Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Capital District Library Council Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library Foundation Board Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library |
| 6/21/2022 | Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library MVLS Member Library Directors MVLS/Foundation Workshop Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System |
| 6/22/2022 | Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library MVLS Awards Committee |
| 6/23/2022 | Barbara Lilley, Division of Library Development Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library Nicole Hauser, Gloversville Public Library Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library Beth DeMidio, Schenectady County Public Library Don LaPlant, The Community Library |
| 6/27/2022 | Fonda Library Chamber of Commerce Event |
| 6/28/2022 | Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library |
| 6/30/2022 | Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library Kim Zimmer, The Community Library |